

2014 RSVP PANEL REVIEWER HANDBOOK



Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** ★★ ★ 



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NOTE: Please email PeerReviewers@cns.gov with any questions or suggestions about this Handbook or any of the training materials. Emails to this address are received by GARP support staff and every effort is made to respond within one business day.



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Section 1.0: Introduction

1.1 Welcome to the 2014 RSVP Blended Review Handbook

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) developed this Handbook and other training materials to prepare Reviewers for their role in the 2014 RSVP Grant Application Review Process (GARP). As part of the training curriculum, this Handbook serves as the central reference for preparing for the Blended review activities.

CNCS has developed online Orientation Sessions that complement particular sections in this Handbook to ensure that Reviewers are fully prepared for the Blended review experience. It is recommended that Reviewers first read through the sections of the Handbook, and then access the corresponding Orientation Sessions when indicated in the text.

These Sessions include:

- ◆ Welcome to CNCS (External Reviewers only)
- ◆ RSVP 101 for Reviewers
- ◆ Preparing for the Grant Application Review
- ◆ Reviewing with the Selection Criteria
- ◆ Panel Coordinator Role (Panel Coordinators only)

All Review Participants (new and experienced) are expected to familiarize themselves with all review material and participate in the orientation sessions.

CNCS conducts some orientations live to provide an opportunity for questions. All Orientation Sessions are required (except where noted); therefore a recording of each session is available to Review Participants to ensure access and full orientation.

All training and reference materials will be available on the **CNCS Reviewer Resource webpage** (www.nationalservice.gov/reviewer/resourcepage) where Reviewers will access key forms in the appropriate electronic format. There are two types of forms: Administrative and Review.

Administrative forms include Conflict of Interest (COI) and External Reviewer Participation Agreement. These forms are available as PDFs to download, complete (sign), and submit via fax or email.

Review Forms include the Individual Reviewer Form (IRF) and Panel Discussion Report (PDR). These forms are provided in a Word format and are available as Word documents to enable Review Participants to download and use the forms to prepare their draft before submitting them in eGrants, the electronic database. Reviewers conclude the review by receiving final approval from their Program Office Liaison (POL) and recording their final review results in eGrants.

After reading this Handbook and reviewing the required orientation sessions, Reviewers will understand:

- ◆ The steps of the Blended Review process for the 2014 competition
- ◆ The expectations of the Reviewer role, and other Review Participants in the Blended review process
- ◆ The schedule and requirements for participation in the Review process
- ◆ The RSVP Selection Criteria that are considered in the Blended review
- ◆ How to evaluate applications according to the RSVP Selection Criteria
- ◆ How to write meaningful, evaluative comments for applications
- ◆ The importance of fairness and equity in the Review, and how each Review Participant fits into that responsibility
- ◆ How to serve as a productive member on a review panel
- ◆ How to participate effectively in panel discussions



This Handbook is structured as follows:

CNCS Grant Review Process

The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants: overview of CNCS' competitive grant life cycle and the context for the Blended review of applications

The Grant Application Review Process: description of CNCS' application review process and expectations of Review Participants

- ◆ The Blended Review Process
- ◆ Roles and Responsibilities in Blended Review

The 2014 RSVP Grant Application Review

- ◆ Preparing for the 2014 RSVP Grant Application Review – overall guidance regarding initial steps and basic planning information
- ◆ Reviewer Timeline and Milestones
- ◆ Key Review Forms
- ◆ Conflict of Interest, Bias, and Confidentiality

Reviewing the RSVP 2014 Applications – comprehensive guidance on participating in the review process as a Reviewer

- ◆ Conducting the Individual Reviews
 - The RSVP Selection Criteria
- ◆ Participating in the panel discussions
- ◆ Finalizing the Individual Reviewer Forms
- ◆ Completing the Close Out Process

1.2 Welcome to Senior Corps' RSVP Competition

What is Senior Corps?

Senior Corps taps the skills, talents, and experience of more than 330,000 Americans age 55 and over to meet a wide range of community challenges through three programs — RSVP, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program. RSVP volunteers recruit and manage other volunteers, participate in environmental projects, mentor and tutor children, and respond to natural disasters, among many other activities. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to young people with special needs. Senior Companions help frail seniors and other adults maintain independence primarily in the clients' own homes.

What is RSVP?

Established in 1971 and now one of the largest senior volunteer organizations in the nation, RSVP engages more than 296,000 people age 55 and older in a diverse range of volunteer activities. Volunteers tutor children, renovate homes, teach English to immigrants, assist victims of natural disasters, provide independent living services, recruit and manage other volunteers, and serve their communities in many other ways. RSVP volunteers choose how, where, and the frequency with which they want to serve, with commitments ranging from a few hours to 40 hours per week. Eligibility: RSVP is open to all people age 55 and over. Volunteers do not receive monetary incentives, but sponsoring organizations may reimburse them for some costs incurred during service, including meals and transportation.

Appendices are provided that include essential reference tools, including specific RSVP materials, copies of all review-related forms, and additional guidance and tips.

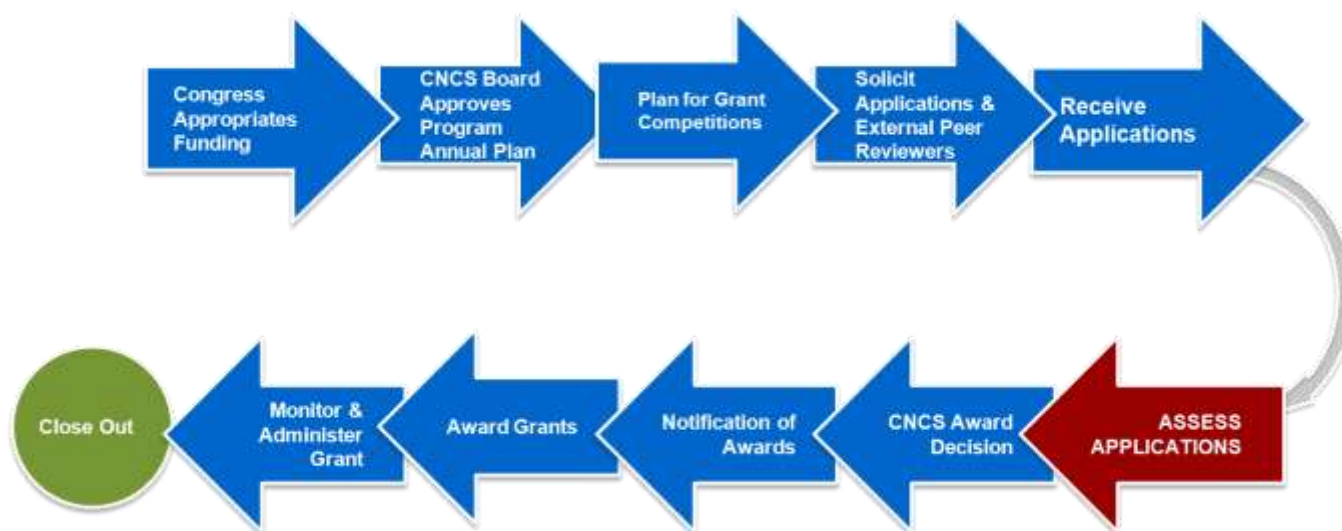
Section 2.0: CNCS Grant Application Review Process

CNCS is a federal agency created to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering; it has become the nation's largest grant-making agency supporting national and community service programs and volunteerism. CNCS engages more than five million Americans who volunteer to meet local needs and improve communities through a wide array of service opportunities. Additional information on CNCS and its programs is available online at www.nationalservice.gov.

2.1 The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants

CNCS has established a multi-step grant-making process from the appropriation of funds and awarding grants, through monitoring activities, to close out. A summary of this process is presented in Figure 1, The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants. A description of each step and more specifics about CNCS grant-making process is available at: www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/cnsggrantreviewandselectionprocessdescription.pdf

Figure 1: The Life Cycle of Competitive Grants



For the RSVP competitions: CNCS utilizes a multi-stage review process to assess applications, which includes the involvement of reviewers both externally recruited and who are CNCS Staff. A Blended Review, consisting of CNCS Staff and External Reviewers conducting individual reviews and panel discussions, is conducted for each eligible application. Based on the results from the Blended Review, an Internal Staff Review is conducted for applications that meet the criteria to advance in the review process and is further detailed in subsequent sections of this Handbook and the corresponding orientation sessions. The *Assess Applications* step is where the Blended Reviewer, contributes to the CNCS grant process.

2.2 The Grant Application Review Process

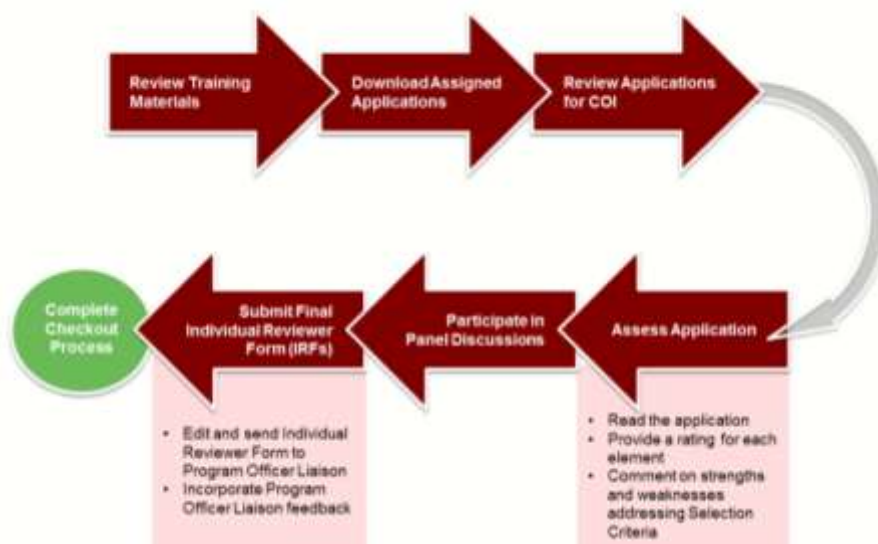
2.2.1 The Blended Review Process

The purpose of this review process is to identify the highest-quality applications based on the Selection Criteria published in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (*Notice*) that are established in CNCS regulations and applicable statutes. CNCS carefully chooses Review Participants for their expertise and ability to objectively assess the quality of proposed projects. Review Participants are not making judgments or determinations on whether applications should be funded, but are providing an assessment of the quality of the applications. CNCS Chief

Executive Officer makes all funding decisions and utilizes Blended review results as input to help inform those decisions.

CNCS developed a process for conducting the Blended Review of grant applications, which is depicted in Figure 2, *The Blended Review Process*. Each step is briefly described below. An in-depth discussion of these steps and activities in the Blended review process is provided in subsequent sections of this Handbook.

Figure 2: The Blended Review Process



Reviewer Training and Orientation Materials: All Review Participants are required to review the training materials including this Handbook and a series of Orientation Sessions. This ensures that Review Participants are fully prepared for their role, in order to provide a meaningful review and standardized assessment of the applications.

Accessing Assigned Applications: A set of applications is assigned to each panel and made available for download from the Shared Drive for Internal Reviewers and for External Reviewers downloaded from eGrants, the process of downloading applications is detailed in Appendix I of this Handbook. Each panel only has access to its assigned applications.

Review Applications for Conflicts of Interest (COI): The first step in beginning the review of an application is to determine if there are any potential conflicts of interest. This must take place within the first day of receiving panel assignments, prior to delving into the technical content of the application in case recusals or reassignments are necessary.

Assess Applications: Each Reviewer conducts a detailed individual review of each assigned application according to the Selection Criteria specified by CNCS. The individual review includes reading the application, providing a rating for each element, and commenting on strengths and weaknesses. After the panel discussions, Reviewers seek feedback from Program Office Liaison (POL) and may return to their IRFs to amend their comments and ratings to ensure that they reflect their conclusive assessment (See Prepare IRFs).

Participate in Panel Discussion: Reviewers participate in a discussion with their panel for each assigned application to share thoughts and discuss their assessments. Each panel has an assigned Panel Coordinator who helps prepare the Reviewers for the discussions and schedule the discussions. While consensus is not a requirement of the panel discussion, Reviewers are asked to listen and consider the assessments and findings of fellow panel members. The Panel Coordinator helps guide the panel to discuss only the relevant aspects of the application in their assessment, consider the areas of agreement and disagreement, and ensure that each Reviewer is addressing only relevant aspects of the application in his/her assessment.



Prepare IRFs: Each Reviewer prepares a draft IRF documenting his/her assessment of each application and submits the IRF to the POL for review and feedback. Reviewers make necessary modifications to revise the draft IRF based on the POL feedback. Once the POL approves the final IRF, the POL submits the Final IRF to the GARP Liaison. All IRFs will go through the same process of sending drafts to the POL, the POL approves the IRF and may request changes, the Reviewer makes changes, the POL approves as final, and the POL sends the final version to the GARP Liaison. The Reviewer will then copy and paste the approved IRF into eGrants.

Reviewer Comments: Each Reviewer completes all strengths and weaknesses sections and provides factual and constructive summary comments on his/her assessment of the applications.

- ◆ The Reviewer Comments should not contain any direct suggestions or recommendations for improvement, and should only address the quality of the information that was in the application (as required by the Selection Criteria).
- ◆ The comments must focus on the most relevant Strengths and Weaknesses that had the greatest impact on the selected Ratings for the different Selection Criteria elements.

Finalize and Submit IRFs: Reviewers re-examine their IRFs and proofread for grammar and other elements before sending the IRF to the POL. When POL approves the IRF, Reviewers copy and paste the IRF into eGrants.

Complete Close Out Process: To receive their honorarium payment (for External Reviewers only) and finalize their review participation, each Review Participant completes a close out process including: disposing of confidential review materials properly, providing feedback in the Review Process Evaluation, and ensuring that all review requirements are satisfied.

2.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

There are several important roles in the Blended review process, and the general responsibilities, along with expectations and interactions are listed below. Please note that this Handbook provides detailed guidance on only the Reviewer role; a separate Panel Coordinator supplement is provided for Panel Coordinators.

Reviewer

Reviewers evaluate applications according to the published Selection Criteria. Primary responsibilities include: **producing high-quality IRFs**, participating in panel discussions, and finalizing the assessment of an application on the IRFs after the panel discussion. There are three Reviewers assigned to each panel, one External Reviewer and two CNCS Staff Reviewers. One CNCS Staff Reviewer will act as the Panel Coordinator. Reviewers interact primarily with their Panel and their Program Officer Liaison, and are expected to be responsive throughout the review.

In addition to reviewing training and background materials, Reviewers are responsible for reporting any actual or potential conflict of interest, and complying with confidentiality expectations.

Panel Coordinator

The Panel Coordinator is a role fulfilled by a Staff Reviewer to guide, support and monitor the work of the Reviewers assigned to his/her panel; manage panel logistics and help schedule the panel discussions. These Reviewers will have a strong background in RSVP and will act as subject matter experts for their panels; however, the POL will be the final authority on questions about the selection criteria. The Panel Coordinator will keep the panel on track, ensure people speak in turn, etc. The Panel Coordinator works in several capacities to ensure that Reviewers complete a thorough, non-biased review that aligns with the Selection Criteria.

Panel Coordinators serve as the first point of contact by both their Reviewers and CNCS GARP Staff regarding any concerns, or information for the panel—essentially serving as the primary liaison or link between GARP Program Staff and the panel. Panel Coordinators are also Reviewers and will help resolve any conflicts among the panel members. If any panel anomalies arise, the Panel Coordinator notifies the GARP Liaison who determines next steps.



Lead Reviewer

The Lead Reviewer is a role everyone on the panel will fulfill for various applications. The panel will assign Lead Reviewers to each application in order to help lead the discussion of that application. Assignments may be equitably distributed throughout the panel. This role is mainly to help lead the discussions.

Each Reviewer is still responsible for producing an IRF for each application, regardless of whether they are the Lead Reviewer or not. In addition, Lead Reviewers will produce the Panel Discussion Report for each application which they lead the panel discussion.

Grant Application Review Process (GARP) Liaison

Each panel will be assigned a GARP Liaison who will answer all process-related questions and provide all administrative and logistic support to the panel. The GARP Liaison can provide assistance with obtaining grant applications and administrative forms (electronic versions), access to review resources, reminders throughout the process, and assistance with navigating in eGrants. The GARP Liaison is the point of contact (after the Panel Coordinator) for any immediate needs with review materials or any roadblocks encountered in participating in the review and completing the review process. All Panel Discussion Reports will be sent to the GARP Liaison at PeerReviewers@cns.gov and should include the Panel # in the Subject. GARP Liaison s will be reviewing the PDRs and will collect the final IRF from the POL once it has been approved.

High Quality IRFs SHOULD:

- *Only include comments that address RSVP Selection Criteria*
- *Reflect writing that is clear and concise*
- *Ensure comments do not contradict each other*
- *Ensure comments are aligned with and support the rating selection for each section.*
- *Be free of spelling and grammar errors*
- *Contain no inflammatory language*

Program Officer Liaison (POL)

A POL will serve as a resource to the panel on programmatic elements. The POL can provide clarification or guidance on any aspect of the RSVP Selection Criteria.

The POL will also be the audience reviewing the Individual Reviewer Forms (IRF) from Reviewers and follow up (as needed) with Reviewers on areas that the panel may need to revisit assessments. All correspondence with POLs should be sent from POLRSVP@cns.gov and **include the Panel # in the Subject.**

Additional expectations for POL interactions may be provided to Panel Coordinators during the Panel Coordinator Check-In calls.



Section 3.0: Ensuring an Equitable Review

An essential goal of the CNCS review process is ensuring that each grant application submitted for funding consideration is evaluated based on a fair and equitable process in the interest of transparency and integrity of the full grant process.

3.1 Diversity in Programs

RSVP proposals are very diverse. This is common and is encouraged and embraced in the RSVP program. RSVP programs are not seen as standard, or cookie-cutter proposals. There is also diversity in program models and designs, location, size, scope, organization type, and target populations. Understanding and expecting these differences will help evaluate an applicant's proposed project in a fair and objective manner. Some areas of potential diversity of the 2014 RSVP applications include:

Focus Areas

- ◆ Potential Diversity: One Focus Area, multiple Focus Areas
- ◆ The number of CNCS Focus Areas addressed by an application is not a selection criterion. The weights assigned to each category are listed below. Reviewers will assess application narratives against these Selection Criteria and weight them accordingly.

Type of Organization

- ◆ Potential Diversity: faith-based, Indian tribes, government entities, and other organizations eligible to apply as outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity,

Program Design

- ◆ Potential Diversity: Team-based, individually placed, working in pairs

Program Size

- ◆ Potential Diversity: Large, small, partnering or network

Target Populations

- ◆ Potential Diversity: Rural residents, low income individuals, Native Americans, New Americans, Older Americans (seniors), or Communities of Color, etc.

3.2 Conflict of Interest

CNCS implements several procedures throughout the review process to ensure fair and equitable reviews. One such procedure is requiring all Reviewers to report any actual or potential conflicts of interest concerning the competition and applications assigned to them.

The following guidance applies to External Reviewers.

- ◆ CNCS Staff Reviewers should consult the Conflict of Interest Training in the Learning Management System, provided by the Office of General Counsel, and contact the designated ethics team in Office of General Counsel with questions. For assistance accessing the training, contact the assigned GARP Liaison.
- ◆ External Reviewers and CNCS Staff Reviewers have separate and unique Conflict of Interest Forms to complete. Please ensure review and completion of the appropriate form.
- ◆ A conflict of interest is a situation in which conflict exists between one's private interest and official responsibility. Such competing interests can make it difficult for a Reviewer to fulfill his/her duties impartially. A conflict of interest exists even if no unethical or improper act results from it.

Each Review Participant must complete a Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statement (COI Form) for the applications they are assigned to review. This is found on the Reviewer Resource webpage. Because of the unique



nature of the review process and the sensitivity of the information through the review, **CNCS determines the potential for both Direct (actual) and Indirect (perceived) conflicts of interest as defined below.**

Be sure to examine the applications and alert the GARP Liaison of any potential conflict of interest.

A direct conflict of interest – often through personal involvement, connection to, or benefit from an application submitted to CNCS

An indirect conflict of interest – through various forms of affiliation, personally or professionally with an applicant institution

Prior to reviewing any grant applications, Reviewers must inform CNCS of any potential conflicts of interest or appearances thereof. If Reviewers become aware of any potential conflict of interest during application review, they must immediately notify a CNCS representative (your Panel Coordinator or GARP Liaison). This notification should happen directly via phone or email. CNCS will determine how to handle any appearances of perceived or actual conflicts of interest and will inform the Reviewer regarding what further steps, if any, to take. It is possible that the Reviewer will not be able to serve as a Reviewer or Panel Coordinator for this grant competition if a conflict of interest exists or even if it would *appear* to others that you have a conflict of interest.

When examining for conflicts of interest, consider the following: any affiliation or relationship of a spouse, minor child, a relative living in the immediate household, or anyone who is legally the Reviewer's partner with any of the relationships above. Examples of potentially biasing affiliations or relationships are listed below (see the COI Statement for more information).

One's personal submission of an application to CNCS

Affiliation with an applicant institution. A conflict may be present if one has/holds (a):

- ◆ Current employment, are being considered for employment, or are consulting, advising, or other similar affiliation at the institution
- ◆ Any formal or informal employment arrangement with the institution
- ◆ Current membership on a visiting committee, board or similar body at the institution
- ◆ Current enrollment as a student
- ◆ Received and retained an honorarium or award from the institution within the last 12 months
- ◆ Personal financial interest that would be affected by the outcome of this grant competition
- ◆ Organization that is a potential sub-recipient, named in an intermediary application (as a pre-selected subgrantee), or is an actual applicant in the pre-award competition conducted by an intermediary organization applying for this competition

Relationship with someone who has personal interest in the proposal or other application, such as:

- ◆ Related by marriage or through family membership
- ◆ Past or present business, professional, academic, volunteer or personal relationship
- ◆ Employment at the institution within the last 12 months
- ◆ Collaboration on a project or on a book, article, report or paper within the last 48 months

Note that Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality form should be completed whether the Reviewer has or has not identified potential conflicts—as it represents the understanding of responsibility regarding COIs, Confidentiality, and the agreement to adhere to the guidelines in the instance that a COI circumstance arises.

NOTE: Complete and submit the COI Statement by **5 p.m. Eastern on September 25, 2013**. Be sure to follow the directions on the COI Statement for submission.



3.3 Bias

Bias is a preference or inclination that may inhibit impartial judgment or objectivity. One's bias is not limited to a negative judgment, or dislike of an application, and is more often found in favor, or an unfounded positive preference of an applicant or an aspect of an application.

Often, individuals are unaware of having a bias, and it may be flagged by another Review Participant, based on a comment made during discussion, or a consistent inflation or deflation in the Reviewer's assessment. Biases are often rooted in opinions and past experiences—which Reviewers are asked to bring in a structured format to this review. Utilizing one's opinion in some ways, but not in others can be difficult to separate—especially as it is likely that a positive inclination or preference may be founded in a Reviewer's passion and excitement about a program. It is important that Reviewers are open to reconsideration should the issue of potential bias come to light.

To avoid the insertion of bias, all Reviewers are asked to base their assessments solely on the facts and assertions contained in the application, return to re-evaluate an application, if needed; eliminate consideration of outside sources or information, and exercise consideration and respect throughout the review.

3.4 Confidentiality

The designation as a Review Participant gives Reviewers access to information not generally available to the public and accords them with special professional and ethical responsibilities. Panelists are given access to information about applicants for use only during the evaluation process and for discussion only with fellow panel members and CNCS personnel. Therefore, Reviewers must not use that information for personal benefit or make it available for the benefit of any other individual or organization. Reviewers may, however, share any general information about CNCS that you learn.

After a Reviewer completes their work as a Review Participant, they may maintain archival copies of review-related information. If Reviewers choose to keep archival copies, they must maintain them in a manner consistent with confidentiality obligations. If Reviewers choose not to maintain archival copies, they must dispose of the information in a manner consistent with confidentiality obligations.

CNCS is committed to Open Government policy, and may make the names of all Review Participants available to the public after awards are made. However, Reviewer confidentiality with regard to the specific applications reviewed will be maintained: Review Participant's names for the application reviews will be protected to the extent provided by law.

Details regarding confidentiality obligations are provided and discussed in the *Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement for External Reviewers*. Reviewers need to access the External Reviewer COI form, **not** the CNCS Staff Reviewer COI form.

3.5 Verify Page Limits to Ensure Equity for all Applicants

Applications from New applicants are limited to 25 double-spaced pages in the Narratives, including the Executive Summary and Cover Page, as the pages print out from eGrants. Reviewers will not consider material submitted over the page limit. This limit does not include the Budget Narrative and Performance Measures. Note that the Performance Measures are printed at the end of the application narrative—if any panel has an application that exceeds the 25-page limit, the Panel Coordinator needs to contact the GARP Liaison for a final determination and guidance. Review Participants must follow CNCS guidance, as this is a matter of equity to all applicants.

Section 4.0: Preparing for the 2014 RSVP Grant Application Review

Prior to commencing the grant application review process, Reviewers must complete the orientation session requirements and become familiar with key background material. The Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (*Notice*) and the Application Instructions govern the 2014 RSVP competition (see Appendices A and B). These documents detail the requirements and Selection Criteria that applicants use to write their applications, and that Reviewers use to evaluate the applications. Comprehensive understanding of these requirements and documents is critical to a fair, successful and objective review.

In addition to reviewing training resources and background material, Reviewers must address Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality considerations, these topics are discussed in the previous section. The key review forms and the Reviewer timeline are addressed below.

4.1 Reviewer Timeline and Milestones

The Blended review process (excluding orientation sessions and other preliminary steps) is 18 days. *Table 1* specifies the general timeline and key milestones for Reviewers. This is meant to be a guide. Each Panel agrees upon specifics and details for their panel.

Table 1: RSVP 2014 Timeline and Milestones for Reviewers

Date	Task	Milestone
Tues 9/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive panel assignments Open applications received Preview all applications for Conflicts of Interest (COI) Download COI Statement and External Reviewer Participant Participation Agreement from Reviewer Resource Webpage 	
Wed 9/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit COI Statement and External Reviewer Participation Agreement to CNCS Read first group of applications Download the IRF from website Begin review/assess first group of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit COI Form and External Reviewer Participant Participation Agreement (email/fax)
Thur 9/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete review of first group of applications Prepare for panel discussion on first group of applications 	
Fri 9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in panel discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with discussion of one application, complete IRF, and submit for feedback Quickly follow with second panel discussion for 2-3 applications Revise and send IRFs to the POL for feedback Lead Reviewer completes PDR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete first draft of IRFs Panel discussion of first group Reviewers send PDR to GARP Liaison CC's POL Submit one IRF to POL (to gain initial feedback from POL)
Mon 9/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive and incorporate POL feedback on draft IRFs Submit approved IRFs in eGrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive Feedback from POL on first IRF
Tues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read second group of applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit second IRF to POL (having



Date	Task	Milestone
10/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin review/assess second group of applications 	incorporated POL feedback from the first)
Wed 10/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete review of second group of applications Prepare for panel discussion on second group of applications 	
Thur 10/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in panel discussion Lead Reviewer completes PDR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel discussion of second group Lead Reviewer sends PDR to GARP Liaison and CC's POL
Fri 10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise and send IRFs to POL for feedback (if applicable)Receive POL feedback and approval on draft IRFs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete draft IRFs for second group, send to POL
Mon 10/7- Wed 10/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise and submit IRFs to reflect POL feedback; Send Final IRF to POL Enter approved IRF into eGrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit final IRFs
Thur 10/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform Quality Control on all work products Finalize all IRFs/ and notify POL 	
Fri 10/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete check-out process 	
Tue 10/15- Wed 10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GARP Staff check scores for any anomalies and contact panel if there are questions 	

September/ October 2013

Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
22	23	24 Receive Panel Assignments	25 Submit COI	26 PC-Check In Call, 1 p.m. EST	27 1 st Panel Discussion	28
29	30	1	2 PC-Check In Call, 1 p.m. EST	3 2 nd Panel Discussion	4	5
6	7 3 rd Panel Discussion	8 PC-Check In Call, 1 p.m.	9	10	11 Check-out	12
13	14 Columbus Day CNCS Closed	15 GARP Staff QA/QA	16 GARP Staff QA/QA	17	18	19

4.2 Key Review Forms

Review Participants are involved in the development of two documents that record review results. A copy of each form is available on CNCS Reviewer Resource Webpage. (www.nationalservice.gov/reviewer/resourcepage)



- ◆ IRF: Completed by the Reviewer during the assessment of each application. A copy is saved for each application; the Reviewer sends the final version to the POL. When IRF is approved by POL, Reviewer copies and pastes it into eGrants.
- ◆ PDR: A report completed by the Lead Reviewer during the panel discussions. The Lead Reviewer sends it to GARP Liaison and POL after the discussion.

Table 2: Synopsis of Review Products

	Purpose	Audience	Use	Content
Individual Reviewer Form <i>(Reviewer)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To document a Reviewer's individual assessment of one application• To provide useful analysis to CNCS on the application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CNCS Staff• Public (potentially subject to Freedom of Information Act or FOIA requests)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies strengths and weaknesses in an application• Used by CNCS to assist in decision-making process• Used by CNCS to develop feedback to the applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ratings on each Selection Criteria element• Overall Reviewer Comments addressing Selection Criteria• Clarification questions that may be used for clarifying information with an applicant
Panel Discussion Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To document aspects of the panel's discussion and assessment of an application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CNCS Staff, primarily the POL and GARP Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarizes the areas of agreement and disagreement• Describes any Lead Reviewer observations• Used by CNCS to assist in decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative comments on discussion points• Lead Reviewer notes and observations• Reviewer scores pre and post discussion



Section 5.0: Reviewing the 2014 RSVP Applications

The 2014 RSVP Grant Application Review Process (GARP) is based on a non-consensus model – meaning Reviewers do not need to reach consensus (unified group agreements) regarding the assessment of an application. Different perspectives and opinions are acceptable and welcomed.

Each Reviewer is assigned to a panel consisting of one External Reviewer and two Staff Reviewers, one of the Staff Reviewers will also act as the Panel Coordinator. Each panel is assigned between six and eight applications, which are reviewed individually by each Reviewer and then discussed collectively by the entire panel on a rolling basis.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Required Online Orientation Session:

Preparing for the Review

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

5.1 Consideration of the Performance Measures and Work Plans during Blended Review

Each application is made up of three parts: the 424 Facesheet, the Budget Narrative, and the Budget. Each applicant's Performance Measures and Work Plans are included at the end of their 424 Narrative. The content from the Performance Measures can and should be considered in making selection criteria assessments.

Reviewers should **not** consider, assess, or comment on the structure of the Performance Measures and Work Plans. **Only** use relevant content from the Measures and Plans along with application narrative to make assessments about the application with respect to the Selection Criteria.

Work Plan criteria weight is incorporated into the IRF.

5.2 Conducting the Individual Review

5.2.1 Accessing the Assigned Panel Applications

The GARP Liaison assigned to a panel, sends all the Reviewers on that panel an email with Reviewer contact information and a list of the applications to be reviewed. External Reviewers then go into eGrants and download their applications using the instructions in Appendix I. Staff Reviewers download their applications from the CNCS shared drive. All panel emails come from the email box PeerReviewers@cns.gov.

Directions on accessing External Reviewer assigned applications from eGrants are located in Appendix I.

5.2.2 Read the Applications

Reviewers read each application, focusing on the quality of the applicant's response. Applicants provide responses in three categories: (1) Program Design, (2) Organizational Capacity and Management, and (3) Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy. Within each category the specific Selection Criteria have been broken out. Please read through the IRF before you begin reading the applications. Blended Review participants will be reviewing only the first two categories (Program Design and Organizational Capacity and Management). The third category will be reviewed by CNCS' Field Financial Management Center.

Reviewers then assess the application, highlighting the application's significant strengths and weaknesses relative to the Selection Criteria for each of the selection criteria elements, and assign a rating to each element.

Significant Strengths	Significant Weaknesses
Shows that the applicant has clearly demonstrated both an understanding of, and the ability to address, a key issue in program implementation or management.	Criteria are either unaddressed or addressed so poorly that it causes concern about the applicant's ability to successfully implement the proposed project.



The applications are generally reviewed in two to three groups and it is important to read the applications in the order that the panel will discuss them. Focus on assessing how well the application has addressed the established Selection Criteria described in *the Notice*. The assigned applications are downloaded by Reviewers either from eGrants or CNCS' shared drive on the first day of the Review Period: September 24, 2013.

Reviewers do not need to produce one or more “highly-rated” applications. Although applicants may be competing against each other, **Reviewers should consider the applications significant strengths and weaknesses when measured against the Selection Criteria, NOT measured against other applications.** The goal for Reviewers when reading an application is to seek out information in the application that enables Reviewers to answer the following questions:

Does the application address the Selection Criteria?

- ◆ If yes, to what degree and what is the quality/feasibility of what is proposed?
- ◆ If not, what is lacking or unclear?

5.2.3 Completing the Individual Reviewer Form (IRF)

All Reviewers must complete an IRF for each application assigned to their panel. There are five components to the IRF:

1. **Rating** the application based on selection criteria, using the Rubric built into the IRF
2. Providing **comments** on strengths and weaknesses addressing Selection Criteria at the end of every subcategory
3. Adding the **Total Score**
4. Identify any **Clarification Questions** whose answers may have helped in the review
5. Assembling the **Applicant Feedback Comments** that are the most significant in scoring decisions from previous comments

How to complete the IRF:

1. Download the IRF from the Reviewer Webpage
2. Complete a draft IRF
3. Save the draft IRF using the naming convention:
 - a. “IRF.legal applicant name. last four digits of application ID.Reviewer last name”
 - b. example “IRF.SuperApplicant.5177.Smith”
4. Discuss the application with the panel and go over the IRF with the fellow Reviewers; make any adjustments to the score or ratings based on the panel discussion
5. Send the IRF to the POL for review
6. Receive and incorporate feedback from POL
7. Receive final approval from POL
8. POL sends the final IRF to the GARP Liaison
9. Reviewer copies and pastes approved IRF into eGrants

In the IRF, Reviewers evaluate the extent to which the application meets each of the Selection Criteria elements specified in *the Notice*. Each element will be rated as *Excellent*, *Good*, *Fair*, or *Does Not Meet*. Specific definitions for each rating are provided in the IRF (see Appendix D for an example of an IRF). Each Reviewer's assessment is based on their evaluation of the quality of the applicant's response to the Selection Criteria when reading the application.

For each application reviewed, Reviewer Comments will:



- ◆ Capture the assessment of the application’s significant strengths and weaknesses with respect to the Selection Criteria in the Reviewer Comments sections
- ◆ Provide a basis for the Ratings the Reviewer assigned to the Selection Criteria elements
- ◆ Provide CNCS Staff with insights into why the Reviewer selected a specific rating for an application

See Appendix F for the *Example IRF*

Although Reviewers may identify many strengths and weaknesses in each application, Reviewers are not expected to list each one – only the **significant** ones (see Appendix H for *Writing Meaningful Comments and Sentence Starters*).

It is important to keep in mind when reviewing the applications, what types of information Reviewers should NOT assess or comment on (see also Appendix H for *Reviewer Tips/Meaningful Comments and Sentence Starter* for more information):

What NOT to Write in the IRFs

- Include Page #s instead of content
- Make suggestions or recommendations for improvement (e.g., “Application would have been better if...”)
- Refer to other Reviewers, speak about the Panel, or compare to another applicant. For example:
 - “The panel felt that...”
 - “One Reviewer noted”
 - “The XYZ model of learning was stronger...”
- Copy and Paste from Application, or restate a summary of the application information, in place of an assessment

In completing the IRFs, if the Reviewer is concerned that they did not understand something in the application, do not presume to know what the applicant meant to say or tried to say. Instead, assess the application based on what was understood; anything that is unclear can be addressed during the panel discussion (or *noted as unclear* in the IRF comments). Similarly, Reviewers should exercise caution about how they reference information that was in other parts of the application. Because applicants might often include information in another narrative section that speaks directly to the Selection Criteria, Reviewers **should** note the information that was addressed in another section and it should be considered. Reviewers **should not**, however, comment on the structure of the Performance Measures if it does not relate to the relevant Selection Criteria.

5.3 Participating in Panel Discussions

After the individual reviews for each group of applications have been completed, the panels will convene by conference calls to discuss each application within that group. The purpose of the panel discussion is to share thoughts and discuss each Reviewer’s assessment of the application based on the Selection Criteria. While consensus is not a requirement of the panel discussion, Reviewers are asked to engage in discussion about the Criteria and consider the assessments and findings of fellow panel members. The discussion should cover each of the relevant elements of the application, and explore the points of agreement and disagreement among Reviewer IRFs.

Lead Reviewers complete a Panel Discussion Report (PDR) for each application and share the draft with the GARP Liaison (CC’ing the POL) for review, comment and approval (one PDR per application).

5.3.1 Tips for Productive Panel Discussions

During the panel discussion, all Reviewers participate on the conference line. The average time for discussion is expected to be no more than 30 minutes per application. Panels will engage in discussion focused on the comments, assessments and ratings resulting from the individual reviews. The panel discussion should be well rounded and focused on a discussion of the quality of the application based on the Selection Criteria—the



discussion should not revolve solely around the areas where panel members provided differing ratings for a section.

Sharing scores before the call can be a helpful guide in completing the Panel Discussion Report, especially with documenting changes in reviewers' ratings reached through discussion. At the beginning of each discussion, please record the scores for each application on the PDR. If there have been scoring changes as a result of the discussion, please record those on the PDR as well.

Reviewers may agree, disagree, clarify individual assessments and misunderstandings, and ask questions while collectively discussing an application. Based on these discussions, a Reviewer may come to view aspects of the application differently than they did during the individual review. Preparedness, tact, patience and conscious participation are just some of the ways Reviewers can assist in the process of assessing applications, and in making panel discussions meaningful.

Helpful Tips on How to be an Effective Panel Member

1. Review and be familiar with the Notice, the Selection Criteria, the IRF and other relevant documents.
2. Allow the Lead Reviewer to lead the discussion. Reviewers have different styles and will assert themselves in different ways and at different times. Recognize the importance of the Lead Reviewer role and respect it.
3. Have both the application and your IRF in front of you for each discussion.
4. Ask others to explain or clarify their positions and be an active listener. Do not be afraid to ask questions.
5. Focus on the content of what is being said and not the person.
6. Participate actively in the discussion, using supporting evidence from the application to discuss points.
7. Be receptive to opposing viewpoints and put your emotions aside.
8. Answer other panel members' questions and challenges cordially and diplomatically.
9. Expect to return to each IRF and make revisions after receiving feedback from the POL before finalizing the review product.
10. Copy the Panel Coordinator on e-mails to the POL regarding any selection criteria questions about an application.

5.3.2 Completing the Panel Discussion Report

The PDR serves to document the substance of a panel's discussion for an application and your observations or concerns. The PDR should capture elements of the Selection Criteria that the panel members discussed, if there were major varying opinions, concerns that were noted outside of the Selection Criteria, or difficult areas of conversation on an aspect of the application.

Because the discussion does not require consensus, there will inevitably be varying opinions, ratings and assessments from the panel members, the PDR should offer an objective summary of the discussion. When presenting issues or hiccups that arose, be sure to provide information on how each Reviewer or the panel responded/addressed the matter.

Panels divide the responsibility to complete the PDRs. Each reviewer completes the PDR for the applications on which they are the Lead Reviewer. Each Reviewer should complete roughly an equal number of PDRs (approximately 2-3 in most cases).

To complete the PDR, include the pre and post-discussion scores. This is to provide context to the GARP Liaison reviewing the PDR.

Include the areas the panel generally agreed or disagreed, providing a specific example of each.

Indicate if any point was contentious, or if multiple panel members held strong, differing opinions. Provide an explanation of those points.



The PDR is available on the Reviewer Resource Webpage. The Lead Reviewer prepares a draft PDR for each application discussed and provides the draft PDR to their GARP Liaison at (PeerReviewers@cns.gov) for their review. The POL should be copied, but the POL does not provide feedback on the PDR.

The GARP Liaison may have feedback or questions about the PDR. It is important to quickly respond to and incorporate the feedback, and return it to the GARP Liaison in order to receive final approval and stay on the review schedule.

If scores reflect a wide variance between Reviewers, the GARP Liaison may ask the panel to revisit the discussion.

Include your Panel # in the Subject Line when sending the PDR to the assigned GARP Liaison at PeerReviewers@cns.gov.

5.4 Submitting Final IRFs

After the panel discussions are completed, Reviewers share their draft IRFs with the POL for feedback, review and approval. Once POL provides feedback, Reviewers revisit the IRFs and make any appropriate amendments to the comments or ratings to reflect the conclusive assessment and incorporating the POL feedback. If Reviewers must incorporate feedback, provide the updated version to the POL for their final approval. All Reviewers must send their IRFs to the POL for feedback. Once the IRF is approved by the POL, the POL sends the final version of the saved IRF to their GARP Liaison with “Final” in the subject line.

Perform a quality check of the full IRF before entering the IRF into eGrants.

The overall score from each Review Participant’s IRF for an application is averaged by CNCS to represent the overall panel score for that application.

5.5 Completing the Close-Out Process

After all review materials are final, all Review Participants and Panel Coordinators complete their individual close outs. Close out is considered complete when the Reviewer has ensured that all IRFs are complete by:

- ◆ Reviewing IRF for improper language (refer to Reviewer Tips/*Meaningful Comments* in the Appendix)
- ◆ Completing Reviewer Comments at the end of each section, including the Overall Comments
- ◆ Ensuring comments address the Selection Criteria
- ◆ Entered any Clarification Questions that would help gather pertinent information from the applicant
- ◆ Ensuring Ratings are correctly added for a proper Overall Score
- ◆ Ensuring that the POL has approved the IRF as final
- ◆ Entering approved version of the IRF into eGrants (ensure that old versions, incomplete forms, or mismatched sections are not errantly placed in the system) see Appendix G
- ◆ Completed and submitted the 2014 RSVP Blended Review Process Evaluation. Reviewers receive a URL for the evaluation form after the review has ended.

CNCS confirms that each Review Participant has satisfied the requirements of the review, as described in the External Reviewer Participation Agreement. Honoraria checks (for External Reviewers only) will be paid to each External Review Participant electronically via direct deposit within 30 days after you receive confirmation from CNCS that Reviewers have satisfactorily completed all requirements stated in the External Reviewer Participation Agreement. **Please consult the External Reviewer Participation Agreement and the information covered in the Orientation Sessions for conditions that may prevent Reviewers from receiving part or all of their honorarium payment.**



**Thank you for being a Review Participant in the
2014 RSVP Blended Review!**





Appendices



Appendix A – Notice of Federal Funding Availability

Also available at: www.nationalservice.gov/rsvpcompetition

Under Notice of Funding Opportunity



Appendix B – Application Instructions

Also available at: www.nationalservice.gov/rsvpcompetition

Under Technical Assistance Information



Appendix C – External reviewer participant agreement, External Reviewer Confidentiality and conflict of interest form and the CNCS Staff Confidentiality and conflict of interest form

The Review Participant Agreement, External Reviewer Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Form and the CNCS Staff Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Form are all available for download from the CNCS Reviewer Resource Website: www.nationalservice.gov/reviewer/resourcepage.



Appendix D – Individual Reviewer Form

Corporation for National and Community Service			
INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER FORM			
2014 RSVP COMPETITION			
Legal Applicant:		Applicant ID #	
Opportunity #		Panel #	
Reviewer Name	PC	Internal	External

Score: Type the score selected into this column.	Using the reviewer rubric as a guide to understanding the ratings, select a rating to show how well the application addresses each selection criterion element.	
	I. Program Design (50%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening Communities – Questions 1-7 Recruitment and Development Volunteers – Questions 8-11 	
	<i>Strengthening Communities (35%)</i>	
	Q1. Describes the community and demonstrates through both the narrative and work plans that the community need(s) identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area.	
	__Excellent (50 pts.)	Demonstrates a community need that is a <u>high priority</u> for the geographic service area, using objective data and evidence, or statements of support from key stakeholders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested; shows that meeting this need is a high priority for the geographic service area. Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested. Provides a clear and highly compelling description of the community as well as the need in both the narrative and the work plan. Supports assertion of a high priority community need with statements of support from key stakeholders.
	__Good (34 pts.)	Describes both the community and the need in the geographic service area using objective data included in both the work plan and the narrative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a response to all of the information requested. Explains most assumptions that the community need exists. Supports assertion of the community need with examples or other objective data.
	__Fair (18 pts.)	Demonstrates a community need in the geographic service area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes a community need but is sometimes unclear how the objective data demonstrates that the community need exists in the geographic service area. Describes the community but makes some assumptions about the connection between the community and the community need. The community needs in the narrative and work plans are not aligned.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	Does not describe a community need in the geographic service area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons that the issue described is a community need. Makes many assumptions that the community need exists in the geographic service area. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. Does not include a response describing the community need in either the narrative or the work plans.



	Q2. Describes in the narrative how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measure outputs or outcomes.	
	__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Presents an evidence basis demonstrating that this service activity will lead to the National Performance Measure(s). Highest probability and confidence that the service activity will lead to outputs or outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, using an evidence basis (using performance data, research, a well-developed theory of change). ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested. ▪ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed RSVP volunteer activities leads to a National Performance Measure.
	__Good (34 pts.)	<p>Clearly and convincingly demonstrates how the proposed service activity is related to successfully achieving the National Performance Measure(s). High probability and confidence that the service activity will lead to outputs or outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic description of how proposed service activity is related to achieving the National Performance Measure(s). ▪ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
	__Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Demonstrates how the proposed service activity is related to successfully achieving the National Performance Measure. Fair to acceptable probability that the service activity will lead to outputs or outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results. ▪ Makes some assumptions.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Does not demonstrate how the proposed service activity is related or is only tangentially related to addressing the National Performance Measure. Low probability the service activity will lead to outputs or outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed service activity is related to successfully achieving the National Performance Measures. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. ▪ Does not address National Performance Measures. ▪ Narrative does not address any performance measures from the work plan.
	Q3. Describes in the narrative a plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected, and managed.	
	__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Highest probability and confidence that the National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes will be measured, collected, and managed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has experience in collecting and reporting similar performance measures with consideration to proper data collection processes ensuring accuracy and consistency. ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed explanation of their data collection processes including how the outputs and outcomes will be collected accurately and consistently. ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed explanation of the infrastructure available to collect and manage the National Performance Measure data, including systems and tools for facilitating data collection.
	__Good (34 pts.)	<p>High probability and confidence that the National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes will be measured, collected, and managed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic description of how the outputs and outcomes will be accurately and consistently measured. ▪ Includes plans to collect National Performance Measure data that explains most assumptions. ▪ Covers information on infrastructure and data management that explains most assumptions.
	__Fair (18 pt.)	<p>Acceptable probability that the National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes will be measured, collected, and managed.</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is sometimes unclear how the outputs and outcomes will be accurately and consistently measured. Includes plans to collect National Performance Measure data that makes some assumptions. Covers information on infrastructure and data management that makes some assumptions.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pt.)	<p>Low probability the National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes will be measured, collected, and managed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives an unclear description of how the outputs and outcomes will be accurately and consistently measured. Includes plans to collect National Performance Measure data that includes many unsupported assumptions. Covers information on infrastructure that makes many unsupported assumptions. Did not connect the plan or infrastructure to National Performance Measure measurement. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. Does not provide information on either the plan or the infrastructure to collect and manage data for National Performance Measures.
Q4. Program Design as described in the narrative includes activity in service to veterans and/or military families as part of service in the Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.		
	__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Significant activity in service to veterans and/or military families that includes the unique value of service by RSVP volunteers who are veterans and/or military family members. Highest probability and confidence that the plans for this activity will benefit veterans and/or military family members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise in serving veterans and/or military families. Provides a clear and realistic plan to serve veterans and/or military families with the infrastructure to sustain this service. Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting service activity to veterans and/or military families.
	__Good (34 pts.)	<p>Significant activity in service to veterans and/or military families. High probability and confidence that the plans for this activity will benefit veterans and/or military family members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic plan to serve veterans and/or military families. Explains most assumptions and reasons. Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines.
	__Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Some activity in service to veterans and/or military families. Acceptable confidence that the plans for this activity will be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is sometimes unclear how the proposed service activities will serve veterans and/or military families. Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no activity(ies) in service to veterans and/or military families or little confidence that proposed plans will lead to activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives an unclear description of how the proposed service activities will serve veterans and/or military families. Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons in serving veterans and/or military families. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. Does not address veterans and/or military families.
<p>Q5. Work plans logically connect four major elements in the Primary Focus Area to each other and are aligned with National Performance Measure instructions:</p> <p>◆ 1. The community need(s) identified</p>		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 2. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers ◆ 3. The instrument description and data collection plans 4. Work plans include target numbers that lead to outcomes or outputs, and are appropriate for the level of duplicated volunteers assigned to the work plan.
__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Clearly and convincingly connects a community need and the service activities to a National Performance Measure output and <u>OUTCOME</u> appropriate to the number of duplicated volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, and commits to National Performance Measure outcomes that address the community need. ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested. ▪ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities connect the community need to a National Performance Measure output and outcome. ▪ Links four major element ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instrument, and National Performance Measure outputs and outcomes that are appropriate to the number of duplicated volunteers. ▪ Includes a Data Collection Plan.
__Good (34 pts.)	<p>Clearly and convincingly connects a community need and the service activities to a National Performance Measure <u>OUTPUT</u> appropriate to the number of duplicated volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a response to all of the information requested. ▪ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities connect the community need to National Performance Measure outputs. ▪ Links four major elements explaining and connecting a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instrument, and National Performance Measure outputs that are appropriate to the number of duplicated volunteers. ▪ Includes a Data Collection Plan.
__Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Connects a community need and the service activities to a National Performance Measure <u>OUTPUT</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covers a community need, service activities, instrument descriptions and a National Performance Measure output that are related. ▪ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities connect the community need to a National Performance Measure output and align with the National Performance Measure instructions. ▪ Includes unrealistic target numbers or volunteer numbers. ▪ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained in describing and connecting a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instruments, and a National Performance Measure output. ▪ Outputs and Outcomes may not be appropriate for the number of duplicated volunteers.
__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Does not connect the four major elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The community need, service activities, data collection instrument, and National Performance Measure output are not related. ▪ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities connect the community need to National Performance Measure outputs. ▪ Includes at least one work plan with zero target numbers. ▪ Did not connect a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instrument, and a National Performance Measure outcome. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. ▪ Does not address one of the four major elements.
<p>Q6*. Work plans logically connect four major elements in the <u>Other Focus Areas</u> and Capacity Building to each other and are aligned with National Performance Measure instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 1. The community need(s) identified 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 2. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers ◆ 3. The instrument description and data collection plans ◆ 4. Work plans include target numbers that lead to outcomes or outputs, and are appropriate for the level of duplicated volunteers assigned to the work plan. <p>*This selection criteria will only be applicable to applications with service activities in Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building.</p>
__ N/A (Double Q5 pts.)	This application does not include service activities in Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building.
__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Clearly and convincingly connects a community need and the service activities to a National Performance Measure output and <u>OUTCOMES</u> appropriate to the number of duplicated volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, and commits to National Performance Measure outcomes that address the community need. ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested. ▪ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities connect the community need to a National Performance Measure output and outcome. ▪ Links four major element ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instrument, and a National Performance Measure output and outcome. ▪ Includes a Data Collection Plan.
__Good (34 pts.)	<p>Clearly and convincingly connects a community need and the service activities to a National Performance Measure <u>OUTPUT</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a response to all of the information requested. ▪ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities connect the community need to National Performance Measure outputs. ▪ Links four major elements explaining and connecting a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instrument, and a National Performance Measure output. ▪ Includes a Data Collection Plan.
__Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Connects a community need and the service activities to a National Performance Measure <u>OUTPUT</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covers a community need, service activities, instrument descriptions and a National Performance Measure output that are related. ▪ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities connect the community need to a National Performance Measure output and align with the National Performance Measure instructions. ▪ Includes unrealistic target numbers or volunteer numbers. ▪ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained in describing and connecting a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instruments, and a National Performance Measure output. ▪ Outputs and Outcomes may not be appropriate for the number of duplicated volunteers.
__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Does not connect the four major elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The community need, service activities, data collection instrument, and National Performance Measure output are not related. ▪ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities connect the community need to National Performance Measure outputs. ▪ Includes at least one work plan with zero target numbers. ▪ Did not connect a community need to RSVP volunteer activity, data collection instrument, and a National Performance Measure outcome. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. ▪ Does not address one of the four major elements.



Q7. In assessing the work plans, applications will receive credit for percentage of unduplicated * volunteers in National Performance Measure outcome work plans above the minimum 10%.		
___>80% (50 pts.)	<p>(Note: This percentage is generated by the eGrants performance module. Potential applicants may use the recommended worksheet associated with the Senior Corps: RSVP Grant Application to develop their work plans.)</p> <p>*Number of Unduplicated Volunteers: This is the proposed number of volunteers who will be performing each service activity. Each volunteer can only be counted once when assigned to a service activity. The volunteer should be counted in the area where he/she will make the most impact – in terms of the type of service or in terms of the scope of service, such as the most number of hours served.</p>	
___60% - 80% (40 pts.)		
___40% - <60% (30 pts.)		
___20% - <40% (20 pts.)		
___> 10% - <20% (10 pts.)		
___<10% (0 pts.)		
STRENGTHS: (Provide significant strengths identified in your assessment)		
WEAKNESSES: (Provide significant weaknesses identified in your assessment)		
Recruitment and Development of Volunteers (15%)		
Q8. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to create well-developed high quality RSVP volunteer assignments with opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities.		
___Excellent (38 pts.)	Realistic plan and infrastructure to create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Volunteer assignments include all of the following: opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities.▪ Goes beyond what was requested and is actively measuring the impact of volunteer activity on the RSVP volunteer.▪ Provides a clear and realistic plan to create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments, and the infrastructure to sustain this volunteer coordination.
___Good (26 pts.)	Realistic plan and infrastructure to create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Volunteer assignments include at least <u>three</u> of the following: opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities.▪ Provides a realistic plan to create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments.▪ Explains most assumptions regarding infrastructure to sustain this volunteer coordination.



	___Fair (14 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan to create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer assignments include at least <u>two</u> of the following: opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities. Is sometimes unclear how the proposed plan and infrastructure will create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments. Makes some assumptions regarding the infrastructure required to coordinate volunteers.
	___Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no plan to create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer assignments include only <u>one</u> of the following: opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities. Gives an unclear description of how the proposed plan or infrastructure will create high quality RSVP volunteer assignments. Does not address volunteer coordination or gives many unsupported assumptions. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it.
Q9. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training needed to be highly effective means to addressing identified community need(s) in both the Primary Focus Area and in Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.		
	___Excellent (38 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan and infrastructure to create high quality RSVP volunteer training that includes evaluations of the training by the RSVP volunteers or the stations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested and is actively evaluating the training. Provides a clear and realistic plan to train volunteers, with infrastructure that includes a training curriculum and training material.
	___Good (26 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan and infrastructure to train RSVP volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic plan to train volunteer. Explains most assumptions regarding infrastructure required to support RSVP volunteer training.
	___Fair (14 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan to train RSVP volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is sometimes unclear how the training activity is related to service activities. Makes some assumptions regarding infrastructure required to support RSVP volunteer training.
	___Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no plan to provide training to RSVP volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives an unclear description of how the proposed training is related to service activities. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. Does not address RSVP volunteer training.
Q10. Describes the demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served. This could possibly include:		
	___Excellent (38 pts.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency. Veterans and military family members as RSVP volunteers. RSVP volunteers with disabilities. <p>Realistic plan and infrastructure for significant activity in the recruitment and development of RSVP volunteers who are from one of the specific volunteer pools above, and that includes developing service activities that might be particularly attractive to the volunteer pool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has partnered with volunteer stations that will assist in recruitment and development. Provides a clear and highly compelling plan to recruit and develop RSVP volunteers from one of the above volunteer pools. Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting service activity to recruitment and development. Includes a comprehensive description of the community demographics including demographic information about all three volunteer pools above.



	__Good (26 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan and infrastructure for significant activity in the recruitment and development of RSVP volunteers from one of the specific volunteer pools above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic plan to recruit and develop one of the above volunteer pools. Explains most assumptions about infrastructure required for recruitment. Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines. Includes a comprehensive description of the community demographics including demographic information about two of the three volunteer pools above.
	__Fair (14 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan for the recruitment and development of volunteers from one of the specific volunteer pools above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will serve recruitment and development from one of the above volunteer pools. Makes some assumptions about infrastructure required for recruitment. Includes a comprehensive description of the community demographics including demographic information about one of the three volunteer pools above.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no plan for the recruitment and development of volunteers who are from one of the specific volunteer pools above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives an unclear plan of how the proposed activities will serve recruitment. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. Does not address the recruitment of RSVP volunteers from one of the specific volunteer pools above. Does not include a description of the community demographics.
Q11. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize RSVP volunteers.		
	__Excellent (36 pts.)	<p>Plan and infrastructure for significant retention and recognition activity that includes measuring the satisfaction of current volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested, and is actively managing retention activities including volunteer satisfaction measurement. Provides a clear and highly compelling plan of how the proposed recognition activities will serve volunteer retention.
	__Good (24 pts.)	<p>Plan and infrastructure for significant retention and recognition activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic plan of how the proposed recognition activities will serve volunteer retention. Explains most assumptions regarding infrastructure that supports volunteer retention.
	__Fair (12 pts.)	<p>Plan for some retention and recognition activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan is sometimes unclear how the proposed recognition activities will serve volunteer retention. Makes some assumptions regarding volunteer retention.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no retention and recognition activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives an unclear plan of how the proposed recognition activities will support volunteer retention. Gives many unsupported assumptions regarding volunteer retention. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it.
	STRENGTHS: (Provide significant strengths identified in your assessment)	
	WEAKNESSES: (Provide significant weaknesses identified in your assessment)	



	II. Organizational Capacity (35%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Program Management – Questions 12-16 ▪ Organizational Capability – Questions 17-20 	
	Program Management (15%)	
	Q12. Plans and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations (such as preventing or identifying prohibited activities).	
	__Excellent (30 pts.)	<p>Realistic and dynamic plan and infrastructure to ensure volunteer stations and assignments comply with RSVP program regulations and have a plan to prevent and identify prohibited activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, is actively evaluating and assessing current volunteer station management. ▪ Provides a clear and realistic plan to manage volunteer stations, and the infrastructure to sustain them. ▪ Addresses how to prevent or identify prohibited activities.
	__Good (20 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan and infrastructure to ensure volunteer stations and assignments comply with RSVP program regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic plan to engage and manage volunteer stations. ▪ Explains most assumptions. ▪ Explains most assumptions about prevention of or identifying prohibited activities.
	__Fair (10 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan to ensure volunteer stations and assignments comply with RSVP program regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed plan will ensure compliance with RSVP program regulations. ▪ Makes some assumptions regarding infrastructure required to prevent or identify prohibited activities.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no plan to ensure volunteer stations and assignments comply with RSVP program regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed plan or infrastructure will ensure compliance with RSVP program regulations. ▪ Gives many unsupported assumptions regarding prevention of or identification of prohibited activities. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it.
	Q13. Plans and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities.	
	__Excellent (30 pts.)	<p>Realistic and dynamic plan and infrastructure for developing and overseeing volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing assigned service activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested; is actively evaluating and assessing current volunteer assignments. ▪ Clearly describes plans and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing assigned service activities. ▪ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will be managed by the project.
	__Good (20 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan and infrastructure for developing and overseeing volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing assigned service activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic description of plans and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations in order to ensure volunteers are performing assigned activities. ▪ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
	__Fair (10 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan for developing and overseeing volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing assigned service activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is sometimes unclear how the volunteer stations will be developed or overseen.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no plan for developing and overseeing volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing assigned service activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives an unclear description of how the volunteer stations will be developed or overseen. ▪ Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons with little or no connection between overseeing stations and ensuring volunteers are performing assigned activities. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. ▪ Does not address or mention volunteer stations or assigned service activities.
	<p>Q14. Plans and infrastructure to meet changing community needs to include minimizing disruption to current volunteers as applicable and/or graduating* stations as necessary. <i>(*Please see Appendix C for more information on graduating volunteer stations.)</i></p>	
	__Excellent (30 pts.)	<p>Describes significant plans and infrastructure to responsibly graduate volunteer stations to meet changing community needs and plans to minimize disruptions to current volunteers where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has significant plans to responsibly graduate volunteer stations that do not address specific community needs. ▪ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will minimize disruption to current volunteers. ▪ Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines.
	__Good (20 pts.)	<p>Describes plans and infrastructure to responsibly graduate volunteer stations to meet changing community needs and plans and infrastructure to minimize disruptions to current volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will minimize disruption to current volunteers. ▪ Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines.
	__Fair (10 pts.)	<p>No plans to graduate volunteer stations and/or adjust programming to meet changing community needs now or in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not describe why there will be no need for graduating volunteer stations (for example, there is no current RSVP grant in this geographic service area).
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Plan to graduate volunteer stations without plans or infrastructure to minimize disruptions to current volunteers where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed graduation of stations will not lead to any disruption of volunteers. ▪ Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons why volunteers will not be disrupted. ▪ Did not connect the plans to minimizing disruptions. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. ▪ Does not address the requirement to minimize disruptions to current RSVP volunteers where possible.
	<p>Q15. Demonstrates an organizational track record in managing volunteers in the Primary Focus Area, to include if applicable, measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area.</p>	
	__Excellent (30 pts.)	<p>The applicant organization demonstrates a track record of effective management of volunteers in the Primary Focus Area and in measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Previous or current evidence of effective management of volunteers in the Primary Focus Area and in measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area. ▪ Examples of current and past performance measure outcomes. ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested, in 1) managing volunteers, 2) Primary Focus Area, and 3) measuring performance.
	__Good (20 pts.)	<p>The applicant organization has a track record of effective management of volunteers in the Primary Focus Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstrates a sound track record in managing volunteers in the Primary



		<p>Focus Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of current or past activity in the Primary Focus Area. Provides most of the information requested in 1) managing volunteers, 2) Primary Focus Area, and 3) measuring performance.
	___Fair (10 pts.)	<p>The applicant organization has some experience in managing volunteers or some experience in the Primary Focus Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates some experience in managing volunteers OR demonstrates some experience in the Primary Focus Area. Includes minimal examples of current or past activity. Provides responses to only two of the three parts of the information requested in 1) managing volunteers, 2) Primary Focus Area, and 3) measuring performance.
	___Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>The applicant organization has no experience in either managing volunteers or the Primary Focus Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No examples of current or past activity in managing volunteers or in the Primary Focus Area.
Q16. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.		
	___Excellent (30 pts.)	<p>Realistic and dynamic plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested, is actively evaluating and assessing current RSVP Advisory Council, station requirements, and volunteer eligibility. Provides a clear and realistic plan to manage volunteer and station requirements, and the infrastructure to sustain this management.
	___Good (20 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic plan to engage and manage volunteer stations. Explains most assumptions. Provides a realistic plan for an RSVP Advisory Council.
	___Fair (10 pts.)	<p>Realistic plan to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is sometimes unclear how the proposed plan will ensure compliance with RSVP program regulations for volunteer stations and volunteers. Makes some assumptions regarding infrastructure required to support the RSVP Advisory Council.
	___Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Unrealistic or no plan to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives an unclear description of how the proposed plan or infrastructure will ensure compliance with RSVP program regulations for Advisory Council establishment and station and volunteer eligibility requirements. Gives many unsupported assumptions. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it.
	STRENGTHS: (Provide significant strengths identified in your assessment)	



	WEAKNESSES: (Provide significant weaknesses identified in your assessment)	
	<i>Organizational Capability (20%)</i>	
	Q17. Plans and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight (both financial and in-kind) and day-to-day operational support to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars) and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.	
—Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Highest confidence in the plan and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, day-to-day operational support, to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, is actively evaluating how programmatic and fiscal oversight and day-to-day operational support may affect internal policies. ▪ Provides a clear and realistic plan to manage and regularly assess and provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight and day-to-day operational support, to include clearly defined internal policies. 	
—Good (34 pts.)	<p>High confidence in the plan and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, day-to-day operational support, to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic plan to manage and assess sound programmatic and fiscal oversight and day-to-day operational support, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources. ▪ Explains most assumptions regarding infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight. 	
—Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Fair to acceptable confidence in the plan and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, day-to-day operational support, to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a realistic plan to manage sound programmatic and fiscal oversight and day-to-day operational support, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources. ▪ Makes some assumptions regarding infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight. 	
—Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Low confidence in the plan or absence of infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight, day-to-day operational support, to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not provide a clear description of sound programmatic and fiscal oversight and day-to-day operational support, to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources. ▪ Gives many unsupported assumptions regarding operational infrastructure. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it. 	
	Q18. Demonstrates clearly defined paid staff positions, including identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives.	
—Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Provides clearly defined paid staff positions, including how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives and (as applicable) identification of current staff assigned to the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested and is actively assessing staff position compatibility with project management. ▪ Provides a clear and realistic plan that connects paid staff with the accomplishment of program objectives. 	



	__Good (34 pts.)	<p>Provides clearly defined staff positions, including how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives and (as applicable) identification of current staff assigned to the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic staff planning infrastructure. Staff assignments are coordinated with project management. Explains most assumptions regarding the infrastructure required for paid staff.
	__Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Provides some description of paid staff positions, including (as applicable) identification of current staff assigned to the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a realistic staff planning infrastructure. Staff assignments are coordinated with project management. Makes some assumptions regarding the infrastructure required for paid staff.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>No clear description of paid staff positions, including (as applicable) identification of current staff assigned to the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a clear description of how staff assignments are coordinated with project management. Gives many unsupported assumptions regarding the infrastructure required for paid staff. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it.
<p>Q19. Demonstrates organizational capacity to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management, and purchasing. Manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment, and supplies. 		
	__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Highest probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure as described above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise and provides details on solutions to potential organizational issues. Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested above. Provides a clear and highly compelling description of sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the project and grant funds.
	__Good (34 pts.)	<p>High probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure as described above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a response to all of the information requested above. Provides a realistic description of sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the project and grant funds. Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines.
	__Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Fair to acceptable probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure as described above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers most of the information requested above, with a few exceptions. Provides a realistic description of sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the project and grant funds. Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
	__Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Low probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure as required above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not describe sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the project and grant funds. Makes many assumptions and many reasons are not defined. Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it Does not provide one or more key pieces of information requested above.
<p>Q20. Demonstrates organizational infrastructure in the areas of robust financial management capacity and systems and past experience managing federal grant funds.</p>		
	__Excellent (50 pts.)	<p>Highest probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure in financial management systems and experience managing federal grant funds.</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise in financial management systems and managing federal grant funds and provides details on solutions to potential organizational issues. ▪ Provides a thorough, detailed response that addresses both robust financial management systems and past experience managing federal grant funds to include examples and outlines. ▪ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the grant funds.
	___ Good (34 pts.)	<p>High probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure in financial management systems and experience managing federal grant funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides a response to both robust financial management systems and past experience managing federal grant funds. ▪ Provides a realistic description of sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the grant funds. ▪ Supports ideas with plans, examples, or outlines.
	___ Fair (18 pts.)	<p>Fair to acceptable probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure in financial management systems and experience managing federal grant funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Covers most of the information for both robust financial management systems and past experience managing federal grant funds, with a few exceptions. ▪ Provides a realistic description of sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the grant funds. ▪ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
	___ Does Not Meet (0 pts.)	<p>Low probability and confidence that the grantee has sufficient organizational infrastructure in financial management systems and experience managing federal grant funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not describe sufficient organizational infrastructure to support the grant funds. ▪ Makes many assumptions and many reasons are not defined. ▪ Tends to “parrot” back the question, rather than answer and explain it ▪ Does not provide one or more key pieces of information requested.
	STRENGTHS: (Provide significant strengths identified in your assessment)	
	WEAKNESSES: (Provide significant weaknesses identified in your assessment)	
0	TOTAL SCORE: ____ OF 850	
APPLICANT FEEDBACK AND CLARIFICATION		
<u>A. Significant Strengths and Weaknesses for Applicant Feedback</u>		
<p>List 5-8 comments about how the application addresses the Selection Criteria. Using complete sentences, address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that attributed to the selected Ratings, per the reviewer rubric. The comments must be selected from strengths and weaknesses already noted above. Ensure the</p>		



comments respond directly to the Selection Criteria from all categories (program design, program management, and organizational capability).

STRENGTHS:

WEAKNESSES:

B. CLARIFICATION

LIST CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS BELOW. GUIDELINES FOR CLARIFICATION CAN BE FOUND IN THE REVIEWER TRAINING. PHRASE ALL CLARIFICATION ITEMS AS QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.



Appendix E – Panel Discussion Report (PDR)

PANEL DISCUSSION REPORT 2014 RSVP COMPETITION

Legal Applicant: _____ Application ID: _____
Reviewer Name: _____ Panel #: _____ Opportunity #: _____

Lead Reviewer: Initially document each Reviewer's scores before discussions begin. Please document the discussion points from the panel for this application according to the guidance below. Take note of how the relevant Selection Criteria were considered during the panel discussion, and chronicle the significant points of agreement and disagreement. Please include your observations of any anomalies, or concerns from the panel discussion that you would like to raise for the attention of Program Staff.

Pre-Discussion Panel scores:

Panel Coordinator:	Staff Reviewer:	External Reviewer:
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Final scores:

Panel Coordinator:	Staff Reviewer:	External Reviewer:
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If final scores have a range of more than 20 points, please have the panel revisit the IRFs to ensure that ratings and criteria are understood by all Reviewers.

Areas of Agreement

Areas of Disagreement

Were there any points of contentious discussion?

Yes No

If 'yes' please list the topic(s) below and describe the situation(s):



Appendix F – Sample IRF completed and Sample PDR completed

Available on the Reviewer Website for download at:

www.nationalservice.gov/reviewer/resourcepage



Appendix G – External Reviewers Submitting IRFs using eGrants

Steps to Complete the Individual Reviewer Form (IRF) for 2014 RSVP Review.

Enter Individual Reviewer Forms in eGrants

Review each assigned application on your own, using the Individual Reviewer Form (as a Word document first) to document your observations and assessment. In reviewing and assessing RSVP applications, you are focusing on the whole application. Have your panel discussion and make any necessary re-adjustments to your IRF. Send your completed IRF to your Program Officer Liaison, who will provide feedback on your form. After you make the necessary edits to your IRF, and your IRF has been approved by your POL, you will enter (copy and paste) your individual comments and ratings into eGrants.

You will be focusing on the Program Design and Organizational Capacity and Management categories of the IRF. (FFMC Reviewers will be evaluating the Budget and Cost Effectiveness category.)

Blended Reviewers (blue box below)

I. Program Design (50%)

Strengthening Communities (35%)

- Q1. Describes the community and demonstrates through both the narrative and work plans that the community need(s) identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area.
- Q2. Describes in the narrative how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measure outputs or outcomes.
- Q3. Describes in the narrative a plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected, and managed.
- Q4. Program Design as described in the narrative includes activity in service to veterans and/or military families as part of service in the Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.
- Q5. Work plans logically connect four major elements in the Primary Focus Area to each other and are aligned with National Performance Measure instructions:
 - a. The community need(s) identified
 - b. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers
 - c. The instrument description and data collection plans
 - d. Work plans include target numbers that lead to outcomes or outputs, and are appropriate for the level of duplicated volunteers assigned to the work plan.
- Q6. Work plans logically connect four major elements in the Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building to each other and are aligned with National Performance Measure instructions*:
 - a. The community need(s) identified
 - b. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers
 - c. The instrument description and data collection plans
 - d. Work plans include target numbers that lead to outcomes or outputs, and are appropriate for the level of duplicated volunteers assigned to the work plan.

**This selection criteria will only be applicable to applications with service activities in Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building.*



- Q7. In assessing the work plans, applications will receive credit for percentage of unduplicated* volunteers in National Performance Measure outcome work plans above the minimum 10%.

Recruitment and Development of Volunteers (15%)

- Q8. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to create well-developed high quality RSVP volunteer assignments with opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities.
- Q9. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training needed to be highly effective means to addressing identified community need(s) in both the Primary Focus Area and in Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building.
- Q10. Describes the demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served. This could possibly include:
- a. Individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency.
 - b. Veterans and military family members as RSVP volunteers.
 - c. RSVP volunteers with disabilities.
- Q11. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize RSVP volunteers.

II. Organizational Capacity (35%)

Program Management (15%)

- Q12. Plans and infrastructure to ensure management of volunteer stations in compliance with RSVP program regulations (such as preventing or identifying prohibited activities).
- Q13. Plans and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities.
- Q14. Plans and infrastructure to meet changing community needs to include minimizing disruption to current volunteers as applicable and/or graduating* stations as necessary.
- *Please see Appendix C for more information on graduating volunteer stations.*
- Q15. Demonstrates an organizational track record in managing volunteers in the Primary Focus Area, to include if applicable, measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area.
- Q16. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.

Organizational Capability (20%)

- Q17. Plans and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight (both financial and in-kind) and day-to-day operational support to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars) and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.
- Q18. Demonstrates clearly defined paid staff positions, including identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives.
- Q19. Demonstrates organizational capacity to:
- a. Develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management, and purchasing.



b. Manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment, and supplies.

- Q20. Demonstrates organizational infrastructure in the areas of robust financial management capacity and systems and past experience managing federal grant funds.

FFMC Review (red box below)

III. Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy (15%)

- Q21. The adequacy and reasonableness of the budget to provide reimbursable expenses to volunteers such as transportation, meals, and insurance.
- Q22. The adequacy and reasonableness of the budget to support RSVP volunteer recruitment and recognition.
- Q23. The adequacy and reasonableness of required non-federal funds that are budgeted.

To enter your IRF into eGrants, click on the application that you are currently reviewing, e.g., *The Senior's Community Foundation*. The name and application ID of the application that you are currently reviewing will appear at the top of the screen (see below).

When you are pasting your IRFs into eGrants, you will see two sections of criteria for the application. Blended Reviewers will enter their IRFs into section A (outlined in red below), and FFMC Reviewers will enter the Budget and Cost Effectiveness IRFs into section B (outlined in blue below). The review forms will mirror the Word version of the IRF that you have completed.

All Reviewers (green box below)



Welcome Tom Smith	VIEW/ENTER REVIEWER COMMENTS AND SCORES	
09/27/2013, 12:07 PM, EST	2014 RSVP Competition : Due Date - 09/10/2013	
Peer Review		
Current Application	The Senior's Community Foundation - ID #11SI100000	
The Senior's Community Foundation	<input type="text" value="-----"/> <input type="button" value="GO"/>	
View All Applications		
Current Reviewer		
Mr. Tom Smith		
Run Reports		
Select a Report <input type="button" value="GO"/>		
Blended Reviewers Complete questions in the blue boxes	Section I. Program Design (50%) - Pts not entered	edit
	Strengthening Communities (20%) - Pts not entered	edit
	Q1. Describes the community and demonstrates through both the narrative and work plans that the community need(s) identified in the Primary Focus Area exist in the geographic service area._ - 50Pts	edit
	Q2. Describes in the narrative how the service activities in the Primary Focus Area lead to National Performance Measure outputs or outcomes. - 50Pts	edit
	Q3. Describes in the narrative a plan and infrastructure to support data collection and ensure National Performance Measure outcomes and outputs are measured, collected, and managed. - 50Pts	edit
	Q4. Program Design as described in the narrative includes activity in service to veterans and/or military families as part of service in the Primary Focus Area, Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building. - 50Pts	edit
	Q5. Work plans logically connect four major elements in the Primary Focus Area to each other and are aligned with National Performance Measure instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. The community need(s) identified2. The service activities that will be carried out by RSVP volunteers3. The instrument description and data collection plans4. Work plans include target numbers that lead to outcomes or outputs, and are appropriate for the level of duplicated volunteers assigned to the work plan. - 50Pts	edit
Q6*. Work plans logically connect four major elements in the Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building to each other and are aligned with National Performance Measure instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. The community need(s) identified2. The service activities that will be	edit	



Blended Reviewers
Complete questions in
the blue boxes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> carried out by RSVP volunteers 3. The instrument description and data collection plans 4. Work plans include target numbers that lead to outcomes or outputs, and are appropriate for the level of duplicated volunteers assigned to the work plan. <p>➤ *This selection criteria will only be applicable to applications with service activities in Other Focus Areas and Capacity Building. - 50Pts</p>	
➤ Q7. In assessing the work plans, applications will receive credit for percentage of unduplicated * volunteers in National Performance Measure outcome work plans above the minimum 10%. - 50Pts	edit
➤ Recruitment and Development Volunteers (15%) - Pts not entered	edit
➤ Q8. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to create well-developed high quality RSVP volunteer assignments with opportunities to share their experiences, abilities, and skills to improve their communities and themselves through service in their communities. - 38Pts	edit
➤ Q9. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to ensure RSVP volunteers receive training needed to be highly effective means to addressing identified community need(s) in both the Primary Focus Area and in Other Focus Areas or Capacity Building. - 38Pts	edit
➤ Q10. Describes the demographics of the community served and plans to recruit a volunteer pool reflective of the community served. This could possibly include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individuals from diverse races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, or degrees of English language proficiency. 2. Veterans and military family members as RSVP volunteers. 3. RSVP volunteers with disabilities. - 38Pts 	edit
➤ Q11. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to retain and recognize RSVP volunteers.	edit
➤ Section II. Organizational Capacity (35%) - Pts not entered	edit
➤ Program Managements (15%) - Pts not entered	edit
➤ Q13. Plans and infrastructure to develop and/or oversee volunteer stations to ensure that volunteers are performing their assigned service activities.	edit



Blended Reviewers
Complete questions in
the blue boxes

➤ Q14. Plans and infrastructure to meet changing community needs to include minimizing disruption to current volunteers as applicable and/or graduating* stations as necessary.	edit
➤ Q15. Demonstrates an organizational track record in managing volunteers in the Primary Focus Area, to include if applicable, measuring performance in the Primary Focus Area.	edit
➤ Q16. Demonstrates a plan and infrastructure to ensure the project is in compliance with the RSVP federal regulations to include establishing an RSVP Advisory Council, ensuring RSVP volunteers are placed in stations that have signed the required MOU, and ensuring all volunteers are eligible to serve in RSVP.	edit
➤ Organizational Capability (20%) - Pts not entered	edit
➤ Q17. Plans and infrastructure to provide sound programmatic and fiscal oversight (both financial and in-kind) and day-to-day operational support to ensure compliance with RSVP program requirements (statutes, regulations, and applicable OMB circulars) and to ensure accountability and efficient and effective use of available resources.	edit
➤ Q18. Demonstrates clearly defined paid staff positions, including identification of current staff assigned to the project and how these positions will ensure the accomplishment of program objectives.	edit
➤ Q19. Demonstrates organizational capacity to: ➤ Develop and implement internal policies and operating procedures to provide governance and manage risk, such as accounting, personnel management, and purchasing. ➤ 2. Manage capital assets such as facilities, equipment, and supplies.	edit
➤ Q20. Demonstrates organizational infrastructure in the areas of robust financial management capacity and systems and past experiences managing federal grant funds.	edit

FFMC Reviewers
Complete questions in
the red box

➤ III. Cost Effectiveness & Budget Adequacy (15%)	edit
➤ Q21. The adequacy and reasonableness of the budget to provide reimbursable expenses to volunteers such as transportation, meals, and insurance.	edit
➤ Q22. The adequacy and reasonableness of the budget to support RSVP volunteer recruitment and recognition.	edit
➤ Q23. The adequacy and reasonableness of required non-federal funds that are budgeted.	edit

All Reviewers Complete
questions in the green
box

➤ <u>Applicant Feedback</u>
➤ <u>Clarification</u>
no points yet entered



(Please note Blended Reviewers will only need to complete those questions in the **Blue Boxes**. FFMC Reviewers will only need to complete those questions in the **Red Box**. But All Reviewers will need to complete questions in the **Green Box**.)

Click on the ‘*edit*’ link on your screen for each section (see screen shot above). The ‘*edit*’ link will take you to the screen where you paste in your responses from each section of your completed Individual Reviewer Form (see screen shot on next page).

09/27/2013, 12:36 PM, EST

Peer Review

Current Application
The Senior's Community Foundation
[View All Applications](#)

Current Reviewer
Ms. Femi Estrada-Petersen

Run Reports
Select a Report

VIEW/ENTER REVIEWER COMMENTS AND SCORES
RSVP FY 2014 Competition: Due Date - 09/10/2013

The Senior's Community Foundation - ID #11SI100000

Go to Other Applications

You are currently viewing Ms. Femi Estrada-Petersen's comments and scores.

Program Design - [View List of Questions](#)

Enter comments here: (Max 65535 chars)

Enter Score - out of 10 Pts.

[Return to main comments page](#)

[Note: Disregard the ‘View List of Questions’ link—it does not pertain to this review.]

Paste your Word document comments into the white box under ‘Enter comments here’ (see screen shot above). You will enter your individual rating as a score in the ‘Enter Score’ box on the bottom right corner; enter the exact number that is listed for that rating on your IRF rating section.

When finished pasting all categories and entering the rating/score, click on ‘Save’.



Overall Comments

You do not have to enter anything into this box. Click on ‘Save’ and then click on ‘Next.’

To review your next application, click on the ‘*Go to Other Applications*’ box near the top of your screen (just under the application name in the screen shot on the previous page), select another application and click on GO and repeat the process.

You may see names on this list that you do not recognize as panel members—these are typically your GARP Liaison and Program Officer Liaison.

To see all applications on your panel, click on ‘*View All Applications*’ link on the top left side of initial IRF screens (see screen shot on previous page).

Copy and Paste Instructions

1. Type your information into the Word document.
2. To copy the information, you need to left-click and hold the mouse button and drag your cursor over the typed information and release, then right-click on the mouse and select “Copy” from the “Edit” pull down menu (or select the text and hit Control + C).
3. Open your eGrants window and
 - a. Click in the white field in eGrants where you want the information placed.
 - b. Press and hold down the “Control” key on your keyboard (bottom left button on your keyboard). While holding it down click on the letter “V” to paste the information (or right click on the mouse and select “Paste” from the “Edit” pull down menu).
4. Repeat these steps until all comments have been pasted into eGrants.

Things To Keep In Mind

Some applications received by CNCS exceed the required page limits. Because of this, GARP staff mark text up to the page limits, and some narratives may end mid-thought.

Some applicants copy and paste their narratives from word-processing software into eGrants. This may cause some formatting discrepancies (e.g., a question mark instead of an apostrophe). Do not rate applicants down for these visual issues.

If you have a question about the application, contact your GARP Liaison so they can verify the information to be reviewed.

THE REVIEW IS DONE!

For questions related to eGrants, contact your GARP Liaison (assigned once you receive your panel assignment), or the National Service Hotline at 800-942-2677 or <https://questions.nationalservice.gov/app/ask>.

[Disregard the ‘*Evaluation*’ link in eGrants—it does not pertain to this review, your evaluation will be emailed to you upon completion of the review.]



Appendix H – Writing Meaningful Comments: Guidance and Examples and Sentence Starters

Standards for a High-Quality IRF and Applicant Feedback Form

The comments from the IRFs help with panel discussions serve as the documentation of the assessment, and are used to provide to applicants as feedback from the blended review process. The comments may also be released to the public in response to official Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. The completeness and quality of these comments, as well as the alignment between Ratings and comments are extremely important. As such, they must be appropriate, useful, and clearly correspond with the Selection Criteria elements that Reviewers were asked to assess. Provided below is guidance on *writing meaningful comments* and some example *sentence starters* to help construct helpful comments.

Writing Meaningful Comments

- ◆ Limit the assessment to information that was found in the reviewed application. Do not include information from outside sources, the applicant’s known reputation; or compare the application to another applicant, etc.
- ◆ Present evaluative language instead of a summary of details from the application. Provide overall thoughts about the proposal. Give an assessment of what is strong or weak about the application, how does this detail make it strong, and how well the information that the applicant included responded to the requirements.
- ◆ Phrase deficiencies in the application appropriately.
- ◆ Avoid making suggestions for improvement and do not tell the applicant what would have made the proposal better. Rather phrase what was lacking, and how this lacking affected the proposal.
- ◆ Comment is evaluative and appropriate with no suggestions for a “better proposal”
- ◆ No inflammatory or inappropriate statements
- ◆ Exercise care in articulating the assessment. Do not ask questions in the comments; avoid harsh tones, or overly broad statements. Do not refer to the “grant writer” for the application, etc. Below are examples of inappropriate comments:
 - Why did the applicant not respond to the majority of the Criteria?
 - The training plan was virtually non-existent.
 - The applicant never clearly stated who the target population was!
 - The grant writer was slick and creative, but there was little substance to the proposal.
- ◆ Sentences are complete, with correct grammar and spelling.
- ◆ Use spell check, and reread the assessment after you have completed it to ensure that it is clear and well written.
- ◆ Comments address the Selection Criteria only, and do not comment on random aspects of the proposal.
- ◆ Comments should be limited to the strengths and weaknesses of the application, and should indicate the selection criteria it speaks to. Take care to ensure that the strengths and weaknesses do not contradict each other. If there are strong and weak aspects of a Criterion that you would like to comment on, phrase the comment appropriately.
- ◆ The selected Ratings must be aligned with the comments provided for each section.



Characteristics of High Quality Comments

- ◆ Keep comments focused on significant strengths and weaknesses.(that have an impact on the selected Rating)
 - A strength becomes significant when it shows that the applicant has clearly demonstrated both an understanding of, and the ability to address, a key issue in program implementation or management.
 - A weakness becomes significant when a criterion is not addressed at all, or is addressed poorly causing concern about the applicant’s ability to successfully implement the proposed project.
- ◆ Significant strengths and weaknesses must relate to the Selection Criteria as specified in the Notice and described in the IRF Guidance Document.
- ◆ The difference is clear between comments based on fact and those based on professional judgment. (Both are helpful, but the distinction is necessary.)
- ◆ Comments include evidence or an evaluation, rather than a reiteration or summary of what is in the application.

Characteristics of Low Quality Comments

- ◆ There is little or no relevant information to connect the statement to a particular application. The comment is generic and can be read to apply to any application.
- ◆ Comment includes a large portion of information that was copied directly from the application.
- ◆ There is little or no relevant information to indicate overall quality of the section.
- ◆ The sentence is long and confusing, so that the assessment is altogether unclear.
- ◆ There is little documentation or no evidence provided about what was strong/weak, or how it was good/bad.
- ◆ Comments are ambiguous and not clearly related to the Selection Criteria.
- ◆ Comments contain judgments that are outside the scope of responsibility of the Reviewer (for example, commenting that the program has received more than its fair share of funding).
- ◆ Comments contain questions, page numbers, suggestions or recommendations for improvements.
- ◆ Comments are facetious, pejorative, or otherwise inappropriate or unprofessional.
- ◆ Re-stating or summarizing the application.

Sentence Starters

The sentence starters below may be useful in forming constructive review comments in the IRFs. Keep in mind that the Sentence Starters are not exclusive statements, and that CNCS is neither prescribing them nor limiting their use. The purpose is to provide Review Participants with resources for a successful review.

Problem(s) identified

1. Community needs to be addressed are compelling and well-documented/missing... as evidenced by the following...
2. The target community (does not) appears to have been effectively involved in planning (or implementing) the program in the following way/because...
3. Proposed activities (do not) address the identified needs...to support their assertion that...
4. The applicant demonstrates previous relevant success as evidenced by.../The applicant does not make the case that they have been successful ...
5. The tutoring program includes/does not appear to include the following elements and appears to be thorough/complete/sufficient/well-planned/insufficient/lacking in detail/incomplete, etc...
6. The applicant presents limited information about the need to be addressed...they propose to...but the need was not substantiated because...



7. The applicant presents a clear and feasible/an ambiguous...

Anticipated results

1. The applicant has a realistic plan for building the capacity/does not present a plan of the organization and the community to sustain the proposed service activities after the grant ends. Key features of this plan are...
2. The absence of information on... makes it difficult to assess the impact of the program in ...
3. The potential impact of the program on the community is well-demonstrated in the inclusive...
4. The applicant presents a plan to sustain the proposed service activities in the community after the grant ends. Key features of this plan are...
5. This program supported the claim that they are likely to be successful through...
6. The activities proposed reflect a comprehensive program model that...
7. Though the applicant has an innovative approach to...they are lacking...
8. The applicant meets minimal standards in their response, as it was...

Appendix I –Accessing Applications Using eGrants (External Reviewers)

Below are step-by-step instructions for External Reviewers to access their application using eGrants to access the applications assigned to your panel. The process includes entering eGrants and downloading applications from eGrants.

The following graphic will help you understand the different ways that you will be using eGrants, on the one hand, and the website, on the other:

Step 1 – Enter eGrants

You should have an eGrants account and password prior to the start of the review. Go to CNCS's Web site, www.nationalservice.gov. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the blue eGrants button, click on "eGrants Log In. Type in your User Name, Password, and click on the 'Login to eGrants' at the bottom of the page. If you are unable to enter eGrants, contact the National Service Hotline at www.nationalservice.gov/questions/app/ask or call 1-800-942-2677.

Check the "Click here to disable the pictures" box, to help open up your screens faster.

The screenshot shows the eGrants login interface. At the top left is the "Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE" logo. Below it is the "eGRANTS" text. To the right is a photo of two smiling women. The login form has a yellow header with the word "LOGIN". It contains fields for "User Name" and "Password", each with a help icon (a question mark in a circle). Below these fields is a "Remember me" checkbox. To the right of the password field, an arrow points to a small icon (a square with a circle inside). Below the login fields are three links: "Forgot your password? Get help", "Don't have an eGrants account? Create an account", and "View system rules of behavior". A large block of text contains a disclaimer about system security and monitoring. At the bottom right of this block is a "Login to eGrants" button. Below the disclaimer is a link "Click here to disable the pictures" with a checkbox next to it. An arrow points to this checkbox, which is circled.



Click on ‘*Current NOFA Review Panel*’ to find your assigned competition. Click on the “*review individual*” link to see the list of applications assigned to your panel.

SELECT A NOFA REVIEW PANEL TO EDIT	
Current NOFA Review Panel	
→RSVP FY 2014 (stg P1 pnl #1)	review individual
Previous NOFA Review Panel	
→RSVP FY 2013 (Panel #8)	

Step 2 – Obtain Applications

Click on the ‘*view/edit*’ link for the application you want to review (see screen shot on next page). Contact your GARP Liaison if this is a challenge.

An entire application consists of the following reports when compiled:

424 Face Sheet – PDF File

Budget Narrative – PDF File

Budget– PDF File

To print each complete application, or to save each one to your computer, select one of the three reports in the list above, and click on the GO button beneath the report name. This brings up a separate window using Acrobat Reader. You may save the application to your hard drive (if you have Acrobat Reader) or you may print it. To print, click on the Printer Icon on the Adobe screen toolbar. To save, click on the gray disk on the Adobe screen toolbar. Follow this procedure for each one of the three reports that compose a RSVP application.

VIEW/ENTER REVIEWER COMMENTS AND SCORES	
RSVP FY 2014 Competition: Due Date - 09/10/2013	
You are currently viewing Ms. Femi Estrada-Petersen's comments and scores.	
Please select an application to view or to edit.	
→The Senior's Community Foundation - ID #11KC090000	none view/edit
Click on the application ID# once to Run the Reports to access the three parts of the application.	
Click on the ‘ <i>Select a Report</i> ’ box found on the bottom left of your screen.	
Run Reports	
Select a Report	
GO	



You will need to run all three of the reports to review the application in its entirety.

If you are having difficulty running reports:

- ♦ Close out completely from eGrants
- ♦ Open up Adobe Acrobat Reader from your programs (there will be a blank screen)
- ♦ Leave Adobe Acrobat open
- ♦ Log into eGrants
- ♦ Run a report